

SACHEMS HEAD HARBOR  
GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT  
SURVEY

U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DIVISION, NEW ENGLAND  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
WALTHAM, MASS.

July 17, 1961

## SURVEY

### SACHEMS HEAD HARBOR, CONNECTICUT

#### SYLLABUS

Sachems Head Harbor is a small, exposed anchorage indenting the western shore of Guilford, Connecticut, on the north side of Long Island Sound, which is partially protected by a small breakwater at the east side of the harbor entrance. Local interests wish to make breakwater improvements and provide additional anchorage for the existing recreational fleet. The Division Engineer finds that local interests do not wish to provide the necessary requirements of local cooperation, in particular the provision of a public landing and public access, and recommends that no Federal improvement be made at Sachems Head Harbor at this time.

U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DIVISION, NEW ENGLAND  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
424 TRAPELO ROAD  
WALTHAM 54, MASS.

NEDGW

17 July 1961

SUBJECT: Survey of Sachems Head Harbor, Guilford, Connecticut

TO: Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, Washington, D. C.

1. AUTHORITY. - This report of survey is submitted in compliance with an item included in Section 112 of the River and Harbor Act approved on 3 July 1958, which reads as follows:

"The Secretary of the Army is hereby authorized and directed to cause surveys to be made at.... Sachem's Head Harbor at Guilford, Connecticut, ..... subject to all provisions of Section 110 of the River and Harbor Act of 1950."

2. This report was assigned to the New England Division Engineer by letter, dated 21 July 1958, from the Chief of Engineers.

3. No Federal improvement has been authorized at Sachems Head Harbor.

4. DESCRIPTION. - Sachems Head Harbor is a small irregular inlet bisecting the southwest side of Sachems Head, a rocky promontory on the western shore of Guilford, Connecticut, which overlooks the north side of Long Island Sound about 11 miles east of New Haven. About 250 yards wide at its entrance between Joshua Point and the Sachems Head Yacht Club breakwater, the harbor is about 600 yards long and has depths in the outer harbor of 5 to 12 feet at mean low water. Depths of 0.2 to 5.0 feet are available in the inner harbor and in the small cove at the east side of the inner harbor.

5. The harbor is readily accessible to the deep water of Long Island Sound, although numerous rocks and shoals in the approach area deter some transient craft from using the harbor after dark. Partially protected by adjacent headlands and the breakwater at the southeast side of the entrance, the harbor provides refuge from all but westerly and southwesterly winds. Refuge from southwest winds

is limited to a small area inside the breakwater near the yacht club and to the entrance waterway to the small cove off the east side of the inner harbor. Use of this cove by large boats is restricted by a concrete highway bridge, located about 300 feet east of the cove entrance, which connects the headland forming the southeast side of the harbor with the main neck. The structure was approved by the Secretary of War on 18 October 1921 following a public hearing. It provides a clear height of 6 feet at mean high water and a maximum pier opening of 31 feet.

6. The mean range of tide is 5.6 feet. Extreme low tides of minus 2.5 feet have been recorded in this coastal area. The area is shown on U.S. Coast and Geodetic Chart 217, on the Army Map Service Guilford Quadrangle and on the map accompanying this report.

7. **TRIBUTARY AREA.** - The area near the harbor is an exclusive residential area consisting of large, widely spaced estates along the rocky western shore and a colony of summer and year-round residences along the southeast side of the harbor and along the small cove at the east side of the harbor. The entire shore area is privately owned. Extensive riprap and light seawall construction has been accomplished to protect residential areas along the outer harbor.

8. A stone quarry at the west side of the harbor near Joshua Point was formerly operated out of Joshua Cove, immediately to the west. There is no record of commercial use of Sachems Head Harbor.

9. **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.** - In 1909 the Sachems Head Yacht Club, following construction of a footbridge to its clubhouse on Chimney Corner Rock, immediately off the southeastern arm of Sachems Head, built a stone breakwater at the east side of the harbor entrance. Providing a small refuge area at the east side of the outer harbor, the breakwater extends about 300 feet northwest from the northwestern end of the yacht club grounds and has a top width of 10 feet and a top elevation of 4 feet above mean high water. Permits were issued in 1920 for restoration work on the breakwater to correct settling deficiencies and for private dredging in the main harbor and in the small cove at the east side of the inner harbor for fill purposes.

10. Only a small number of private docks and boathouses are maintained in the main harbor area and in the small cove at the east side of the harbor. Dock facilities at the yacht club, subject to frequent storm damage in past years, are limited to bulkheading and a small landing at the northwest side of the clubhouse. There is no public landing at the harbor. Most boats in the existing locally based fleet of about 50 recreational boats moor in the open anchorage at the outer half of the harbor. A limited number of guest moorings are usually available at the yacht club to handle the few transient craft that lay overnight in the harbor.

11. PROBLEMS UNDER INVESTIGATION. - In 1951 the Harbor Improvement Committee of the Sachems Head Association, a 70-member organization representing all property owners in the harbor area, expressed interest in improving the breakwater and dredging the harbor to provide additional anchorage and establish an adequate harbor-of-refuge. Although concerned by gradual shoaling of the harbor and deterioration of the breakwater, the Association deferred its interest in a Federal project during the Korean emergency.

12. The State of Connecticut, as part of a comprehensive survey undertaken for the New England-New York Inter-Agency Committee, held a public hearing at Hartford and made additional contacts during 1952-53 to determine local interest in small boat harbor development at all sites where navigation improvements appeared feasible. The need for additional anchorage area at Sachems Head Harbor was indicated in the 1954 NENYIAC report entitled "Special Subjects Subregion B", but no specific improvements were recommended in this review of individual harbors.

13. A private engineering and hydrographic study was initiated by the Association in 1954 which recommended that the present breakwater be restored and extended an additional 150 feet and that two small breakwaters be built at the outer end of the inlet between Chimney Corner Rock and the southeast arm of Sachems Head. The study also recommended that the outer and central portions of the harbor be dredged to a depth of 6 or 8 feet and that a section of the inner harbor be dredged to 4 feet.

14. LOCAL COOPERATION. - Following authorization of a Federal study at Sachems Head Harbor in 1958, and allotment of funds for the study in 1961, local officials were contacted to determine local willingness to provide a public landing and make a cash contribution toward construction of a project. Town and Association officials replied that there is no public land along the harbor and that the Association and private landowners oppose the establishment of a public landing. Although local interests desire to improve navigation conditions for the existing recreational fleet, they believe that few additional boats could be accommodated in this harbor without changing the residential character of the area.

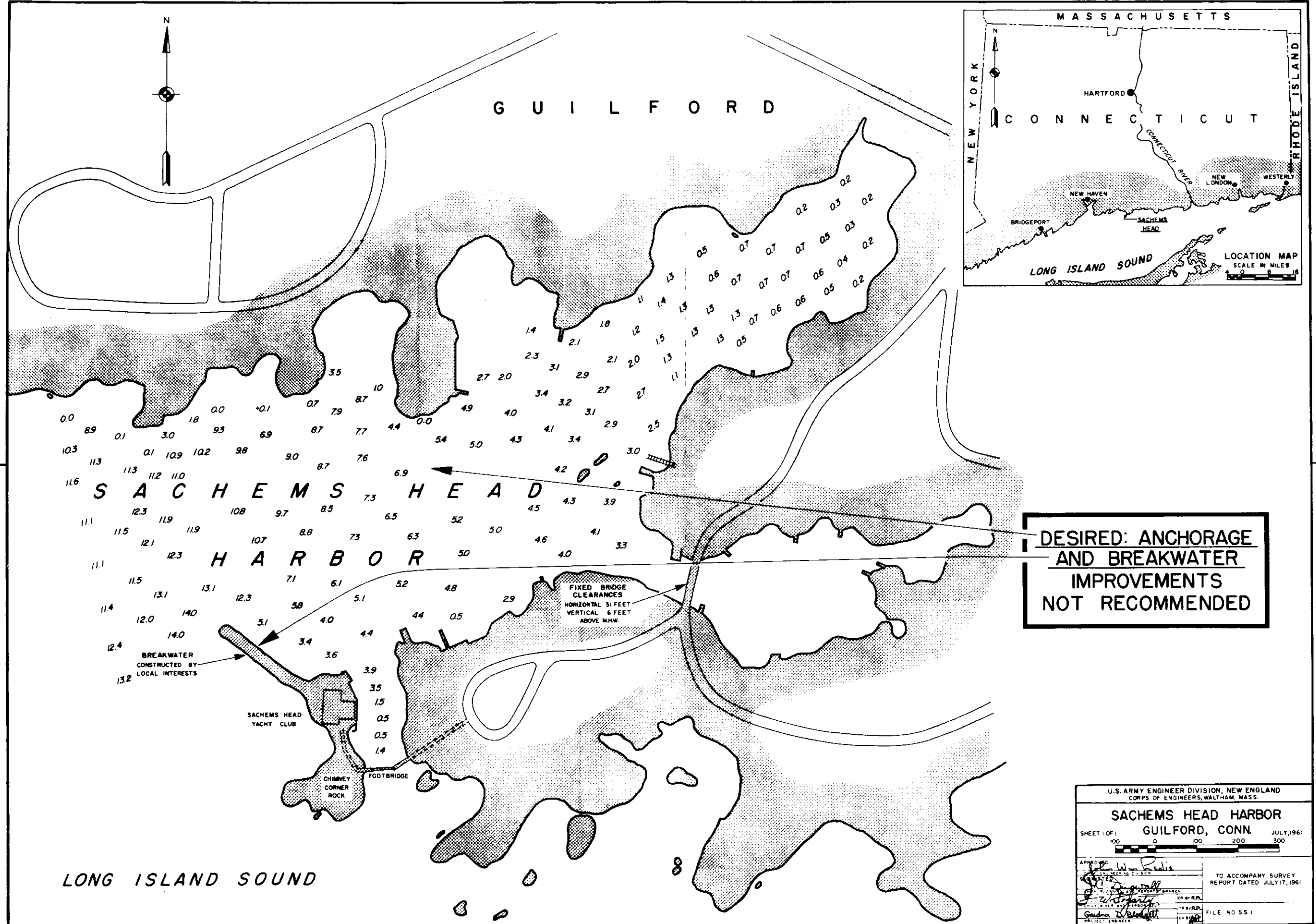
15. In view of this indication that local interests are unwilling to provide a public landing and public access to the harbor, no public hearing has been held, and no economic or engineering studies have been made. It is therefore concluded that no Federal navigation project at Sachems Head Harbor should be authorized at this time.

16. RECOMMENDATION. - The Division Engineer recommends that no Federal navigation improvement be made at Sachems Head Harbor, Guilford, Connecticut at this time.

5 Incls

1. Map
2. Ltr to Chairman, Board of Selectmen, Guilford, Conn.
3. Ltr fr First Selectmen, Guilford, Conn.
4. Ltr fr Chairman, Harbor Improvement Comm., Sachems Head Association
5. Additional Information Called for by Senate Resolution 148

SEYMOUR A. POTTER, JR.  
Brigadier General, USA  
Division Engineer



U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DIVISION, NEW ENGLAND  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
124 TRAPELO ROAD  
WALTHAM 54, MASS.

NEDGW

24 April 1961

Chairman  
Board of Selectmen  
Guilford, Connecticut

Dear Sir:

A navigation survey study was authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 3 July 1958 to consider the feasibility of Federal improvements in the interest of navigation at Sachem's Head Harbor, Connecticut. This item was included in the Congressional Act by Senator Prescott Bush, we understand, at the request of Mr. S.M. Cooper, Chairman of the Harbor Improvement Committee of the Sachem's Head Association. Correspondence with Mr. Cooper in 1958 raised doubt that local interests would be willing to provide the local cooperation necessary for a Federal project. Because the conclusion of the study would rest upon this point, the opinion of the Selectmen is desired before a survey study is started.

A Federal project for the improvement of a harbor for recreational boating purposes would be contingent upon local interests providing a public landing, and contributing in cash toward the cost of improvement. The amount of cash contribution would be based on the proportion of the local benefits to the total benefits. For harbors developed for recreational purposes the contribution would amount to 50 percent of the total cost.

The requirement for a public landing is to assure that the general public may use an improvement constructed with Federal funds. A permanent type structure would be required to be constructed to a size sufficient to serve adequately the type and number of vessels expected to use the Federal project. The public landing must be open to all on equal terms and must be controlled by a competent and properly constituted public body empowered to regulate the use, growth and free development of the harbor facilities.



Chairman, Board of Selectmen

The inability or the unwillingness of local interests to meet these requirements would result in an unfavorable report, however well justified otherwise a considered project may be.

In our correspondence with Mr. Cooper, he expressed doubt as to willingness of local interests to permit construction of a public landing open to all, and to the likelihood of the Town fulfilling the obligation of providing and maintaining a public landing. It is now desired to determine the willingness of local interests to construct a public landing. You are requested to advise if, in the opinion of the Selectmen, local interests would be willing to construct a public landing open to all on equal terms in Sachems Head Harbor. If such a landing is possible, would the Town of Guilford accept responsibility for its construction and maintenance?

In view of Mr. Cooper's interest, a copy of this letter is being sent to him. He may be able to be of assistance to you on this matter. If you desire, arrangements may be made to have a representative of this office discuss this matter further with you.

Sincerely yours,

cc: by sep. ltr. to  
Mr. S.M. Cooper  
Fafnir Bearing Company  
New Britain, Conn.

KARL F. EKLUND  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
Deputy Division Engineer



TOWN OF GUILFORD  
GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT

SETTLED IN 1639

May 1, 1961

Office of BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Mr. Karl Eklund  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
Deputy Division Engineer  
U.S. Army Engineer Division  
New England Corps of Engineers  
424 Trapelo Road  
Waltham 54, Mass.

Re: Your File  
No. NEDGW


Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of April 24, 1961, please be advised that the Town of Guilford does not own any land bordering on the Sachems Head Harbor and for that reason can take no interest in the dredging of this Harbor unless the Sachems Head Association or private individuals are willing to allow this area to be opened for public use.

I understand that the Association does not desire this Harbor to have a public landing, feeling that the number of boats within the Association are of such number that few additional boats could be handled properly.

For the above reasons, it does not seem feasible that the Town of Guilford could accept responsibility for the construction or maintenance of a public landing in the Sachems Head Harbor.

Very truly yours,

  
D. Reinhardsen, Jr.  
First Selectman

DRjr/ac

# THE FAFNIR BEARING COMPANY



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NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT

May 3, 1961

U. S. Army Engineer Division, New England  
Corps of Engineers  
424 Trapelo Road  
Waltham 54, Massachusetts

Att: Col. Karl F. Eklund  
Corps of Engineers  
Deputy Division Engineer

Ref. : NEDGW

Gentlemen:

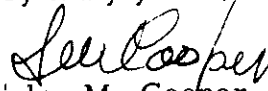
This will acknowledge your letter of April 24 in connection with the possible navigation study at Sachem's Head Harbor.

I have discussed this matter with both the local interests in Guilford and in Sachem's Head. There is no public land on Sachem's Head Harbor nor do I believe that any could be purchased for the purpose of a public landing; in fact, I am sure that the Sachem's Head Association would oppose such a sale and it is quite possible that it would conflict with its zoning regulations.

Under the circumstances, I can only repeat my statements in Boston that I believe that as far as the Government is concerned the matter should be dropped, with the realization on our part that any improvements in the Harbor will have to be at our own expense.

I do appreciate your continued interest in the matter and I am sorry that it does not appear that we can go further with you under the conditions.

Very truly yours,

  
Stanley M. Cooper

J/

## SACHEMS HEAD HARBOR, CONNECTICUT

Information Called for by Senate Resolution 148, 85th Congress  
Adopted 28 January 1958

1. Navigation Problem. Sachems Head Harbor is a small, irregular inlet indenting the southwestern end of Sachem Head in the Town of Guilford, New Haven County, Connecticut. The harbor lies on the northern side of Long Island Sound about 11 miles east of New Haven and about 3 miles west of Guilford Harbor. The mean range of tide is 5.6 feet.
2. Local interests are concerned by gradual shoaling of the harbor and by deterioration of the small breakwater at the east side of the harbor entrance, which was built by the Sachems Head Yacht Club. In addition to dredging the anchorage area, local interests wish to make breakwater additions to establish an adequate harbor-of-refuge.
3. Discussion. Local officials have indicated there is little likelihood of obtaining public access to the harbor and that local interests are unwilling to provide a public landing. In view of these conditions, no Federal improvement is warranted at Sachems Head Harbor at this time.